



The hOLAgram

Mayor's Office on Latino Affairs (OLA)

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\$1,000,000 for Latino Community Education

In February, OLA announced its 2004 Latino Community Education Grant recipients. Mayor Anthony A. Williams has designated \$1,000,000 for the development of programs and services for the Latino community. OLA is in charge of managing and monitoring this grant, which is aimed at improving educational opportunities for Latino residents of D.C. in three areas: public education system complementary activities, development of basic skills for the Latino immigrant population, and improvement of skills for the obtention and retention of employment for Latino youth and adults. The recipient agencies



are: Latino Economic Development Corporation, Carlos Rosario Center, Barbara Chambers Center, Multi-cultural Community Services, SED Center, Second Chance Employment Center,

Neighbors' Consejo, Spanish Catholic Center, Andromeda, ARRIBA Center, GALA Hispanic Theater, Mary's Center, Big Brothers Big Sisters, CARECEN, Calvary Center, The Life Skills Center, La Clinica del Pueblo, and The Latino Student Fund. ¡¡Felicidades a todos!!

Message from the Director

Welcome to hOLAgram. As we approach the spring and get ready for cherry blossom season, we are delighted to inform our readers of the progress achieved at OLA. It has been 5 months of very productive work, since the 2004 fiscal cycle began. First and foremost, OLA has succeeded in hiring most of its staff. I am proud of the energy all of them have brought to our office, and the incredible potential we now carry to work for you.

The process of hiring OLA's team taught me a valuable lesson that I would like to share. The human capital in DC's Latino community is great. Latinos are committed professionals, passionate to the

cause of raising the standards for ourselves and our community, and capable to go beyond the line of duty. Yet, the opportunities are still scarce. As a community, we must work tirelessly to increase those opportunities so that many Latinos can access to and succeed in the competitive labor market we face today. I pledge for your continuing support and active participation in achieving this goal. OLA, stands behind you to make this a reality.

Enjoy the spring!!

Gustavo Velasquez

OLA Takes the Lead on Lead

From the outset of the DC water lead problem, OLA has taken a leadership role in providing the most up-to-date information to the Latino residents of the nation's capital. In this regard, OLA has set in place a crisis-management team charged with the responsibilities of responding to any and all demands from our community on this issue, and also providing outreach support to DC government agencies.

OLA's staff have been in permanent contact with the Executive Office of the Mayor, the Department of Health (DOH), WASA, and the Emergency Management Agency (EMA), among others, to enable the flow of information in Spanish to move, in an orderly yet expedited manner, from municipal health and water experts to the Latino community at large.

OLA has translated to Spanish written materials from WASA and DOH; provided daily press releases to the Latino media; conducted interviews with local Latino TV channels and newspapers; delivered outreach support; organized several information sessions and lead-testing sites; and made its staff available for instantaneous Spanish interpretations through pagers and cell phones for the city's lead hotline.

Questions?

For lead service pipes and water filters call WASA at **202.787.2732**

For free blood tests call Health Department at **202.671.0733**

For more information call OLA at **202.671.2825**

Latino Presence at Mayor's Neighborhood Summit in Ward 1

Residents of Ward One came together on February 23 to listen to the Mayor's short-term and long-term plans for improving the quality of life for all residents of the District. The main objective of the Neighborhood Citizen Summit was to examine what was learned at Citizen Summit III. Residents also came to discuss a long-range vision for the District as well as the priorities and initiatives in the proposed budget for fiscal year 2005. City residents had the opportunity to speak directly with the Mayor and

had a chance to ask questions. The role of OLA was to facilitate the participation of as many Latino residents as possible in the event. OLA is pleased to report that more than 130 Latinos, approximately 50% of the total number of attendees, were present at this summit and directly contributed to its success. We would like to thank all the community residents who attended this very important event, and we encourage all District residents to stay informed on the civic affairs of our city. Accompanying Mayor Williams

at the event was Ward 1 Councilmember and long time supporter of the Latino community, Jim Graham.



OLA and LLU Help the Homeless During the Hypothermia Alert Season

On the evenings of February 6 and 13, OLA, in collaboration with the Latino Liaison Unit of the Metropolitan



Police Department, took to the streets to help the Latino homeless population in the District. We went around the city looking for Latino homeless people, and provided them with food, blankets, gloves, caps and tarps. Our purpose was to protect them from the elements of winter, and to look after their health.

We also visited the homeless shelters, and took the opportunity to speak with the homeless individually. We listened to their concerns and

needs. We learned that the shelters, without exception, have INSUFFICIENT resources to accommodate the number of homeless people in their areas.

At this Homeless Night activity, we conducted a survey to find out whether the homeless were aware of social services, and if so, whether they were taking advantage of existing services that are tailored to their needs.

Introducing OLA's New Deputy Director

We are glad to introduce Monica L. Villalta as the newest member of the OLA team. Monica is our new Deputy Director and started her duties on February, 23rd. A native from Guatemala, Monica has been a long time resident of D.C. and an active member of the Latino community.

As Marta Egas from the SED Center reminded us, Monica started her work in the area --at the SED Center-- by providing outreach for the Girl Scout Council of the Nation's Capital (GSCNC) where she used her background to develop successful outreach initiatives. Monica pursued a degree in public

health from the Berkeley School of Public Health where she was able use her knowledge of the immigrant experience, her ability to communicate in two languages and her expertise in cultural issues, to develop innovative bicultural public health initiatives.

Upon her return to the DC metro area, Monica joined Mary's Center for Maternal and Child Care where she contributed to the leadership and operations of this successful center. Her commitment to Latino families was noted. In 2003, Monica was selected for the prestigious Annie E. Casey Children and Family

Leadership Fellowship. After a year of learning about successful models of service delivery and approaches for transformation in government, Monica chose to join OLA. She has repeatedly stated her commitment to making government work, to developing mutually beneficial partnerships with community agencies, and to further developing a powerful OLA team that is responsive to the needs of Latino families.

Walking the Talking: OLA's new work plan

After many years of lacking one, OLA has unveiled a new strategic plan. This plan comes about at the best time: when the District's Latino community grows at a frenetic rate while opportunities are still limited. Conversations with community leaders and residents were crucial to putting it together. It has taken several months of preparation and dialogue, but the outcome, we believe, is very satisfactory. This plan, which details OLA's goals and operations in the context of the Mayor's strategic direction, will become effective September 2004; thus we are in a transitional phase in which a new OLA structure and functional capabilities are being transformed. The plan is built according to a timely and realistic diagnosis of our community, particularly focused on community-government relations. Some of the issues apparent to the diagnosis includes the limited information on and awareness of OLA and other government entities' services, gaps in the appropriate level of linguistically and culturally competent DC government programs, lack of political and civic engagement by the Latino community, limited research and reported data on the diversity and complexity of Latino is-

ssues/challenges, the escalation of Latino youth violence, and the increasing need to optimize OLA's human and financial resources to meet some of the community needs.

To respond to the growing needs of this community, OLA plans to design and implement initiatives, programs and activities geared toward meeting eight overarching goals. Some of these goals are aimed at keeping Latinos engaged in the decision-making process of government programs and policies, increasing the number of Latino residents informed in a linguistic and culturally competent manner about City and other vital services available to them, working to ensure that DC agencies efforts toward Spanish-speaking communities show significant progress, responding with efficacy to requests for assistance and advocacy issues from community groups, increasing the monetary and non-monetary resources available to CBOs for crime prevention and youth programs, strengthening the performance and outcomes of OLA funded programs, and actively participating in a few major research projects affecting the Latino community.

With four core programs (outreach

and community relations, advocacy and language access, grants, and performance management) and twelve full-time staff, OLA is in the process of becoming a strong DC agency that **works** for the DC Latino community and local government.

Mayor Williams has placed particular attention to the recent development of OLA, and has instructed that our community agenda touches as many Latinos as possible and becomes well immerse in the general priorities of his administration. We look forward to a productive and outcome-driven year.



Latino Commission Chair Jay Haddock, OLA Director Gustavo Velasquez and OLA Deputy Director Monica Villalta, during the presentation of OLA's new plan at City Council.

New \$425,000 Substance Abuse Grant for the Latino Community

In March, OLA announced the agencies and programs that will receive funds under the 2004 Latino Substance Abuse Prevention and Treatment Services Grant. Mayor Anthony A. Williams, through the Department of Health's Addiction Prevention and Recovery Administration (APRA) and OLA, has designated \$425,000 in funds for the development, facilitation and improvement of health programs, projects and services, addressed to diminishing the negative effects of substance abuse for the Latino community.

This grant is aimed at improving health opportunities for Latino residents of the District in three priority areas: substance abuse prevention/education for seniors, fetal alcoholism prevention, and inpatient treatment for adult Latinos. OLA is in charge of managing this grant and monitoring the respective programs, projects and services.

"This grant will help 3 local Community Based Organizations in providing necessary and important health services to Latino residents of the District of Columbia" said

OLA's Executive Director, Gustavo Velasquez. "Recipient agencies will be able to use these funds to improve their current programs and start new health services addressed to DC's Latino community."

The recipient agencies (and amounts) are: Neighbors' Consejo (\$350,000), Mary's Center for Maternal and Child Care (\$50,000) and EOFULA (\$25,000).

Congratulations to the new grantees!

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"Place address label here"

Visit our new Web site:
www.ola.dc.gov



Executive Office of the
Mayor,

Office on Latino Affairs



OLA Welcomes New Team Members!

Sergio Luna is one of our new Community Outreach Specialists. He brings over a decade of experience working with Latino youth in Northwest D.C. Before joining OLA, he served as counselor and advocate at the prestigious Latin American Youth Center.

Vanessa Parada is one of our new Community Outreach Specialists. A native of El Salvador, Vanessa has worked with Spanish community media for more than 10 years. She has served as a source of information for the Latino community of the Washington metropolitan area, organizing programs and multiple events.

Gabriel Jerolimski is OLA's new Grants Coordinator. Originally from Argentina, by way of Buffalo, NY

and Stamford, CT, he is a Sociologist and Planner, former Fulbright Scholar, who has earned university degrees in Argentina, Poland and the US, and has extensive experience in CBO program planning, management and evaluation. Prior to joining OLA, he was Regional Coordinator with the Neighborhood Preservation Coalition of NYS, Housing Coordinator with Hispanics United of Buffalo, and Services Coordinator with the WNY Independent Living Center.

Norberto Martinez is one of our new Community Outreach Specialists. He joined OLA after many years of community service. He graduated from San Francisco State University with a BA in English Literature, and has worked as an ESL

teacher, naturalization specialist, community immigration advocate, and immigration paralegal. Norberto served at CARECEN before joining OLA.

Juan-Francisco Roque is our new Advocacy and Language Access Coordinator. Prior to joining OLA, he was the Political and Anti-Narcotics Counselor and Congressional Liaison for the Embassy of Bolivia in Washington, DC, where he worked with and lobbied the US Legislative and Executive branches. He brings relevant experience on issues such as poverty alleviation, economic development, civil society strengthening, and democratic consolidation. Mr. Roque holds a Master of International Affairs from Columbia University.